

(TMI Focus, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 3 & 4, Summer/Fall 2007)

UNEXPECTED COMPASSION

by Paul Rademacher

In late September, I found myself wandering into the University of Virginia Hospital to see if I could get information on bringing my son, Sean, to Charlottesville for help. At that point he'd been sick and hospitalized for about five weeks, first in Las Vegas and later at UCLA.

The previous months had seemed so bleak. No answers. No cures.

There had been plenty of diagnoses, depending on which doctor we'd last listened to. But it wasn't diagnoses we needed.

Sean is twenty-eight years old, but no matter his age, he will always be my son. It's amazing how fierce the parental instinct is. When your child is suffering, you will do anything, anything, to stop the anguish. But in this case, all our efforts had been fruitless.

At that time, I had only been in my new position as the executive director of The Monroe Institute® for one week. There were all the pressures of moving to a new location, trying to get an understanding of the job, meeting people crucial to keeping TMI alive and well, learning about insurance and employee manuals, reading legal documents from the past, interfacing with the community, etc.

But nothing seemed to matter quite as much as my son.

So, as I stood at the counter for the Center for Digestive Health, I found myself pouring out my story to the receptionist. I had no idea who to speak to or even what I wanted to ask. Could she direct me to someone who could help me?

She listened for a bit, and then, without warning, she did the one thing I was utterly unprepared for—she showed me compassion. Here I was in the sterile confines of technological wonder, speaking to a total stranger, only to find myself struggling to hold back tears welling up from deep inside.

And then she compounded the situation by reaching across the counter and cupping my hands.

"I know what you're feeling," she said. "I've got a child in Vancouver who's sick too. It's terrible not being able to help her."

All at once I started blubbing in the midst of a busy waiting room, stunned by the power of unexpected compassion.

I had originally wanted to write this article about my vision for The Monroe Institute. There will come a time for that. It is a vision that is emerging more and more as I talk with so many people who care so deeply about this place and its future.

But right now there is something more pressing. And that is to acknowledge a power that is at the depth of human transformation. It is the power of compassion. Over the past months my family and I have felt the outpouring of love and concern for our son. So many have called with ideas about his illness, making suggestions of healers or physicians they thought might be able to help, sending medications they've taken the time to put in the mail, along with CDs, prayers, dowsings, healing thoughts, Dolphin Energy Club support, and best wishes. Many have simply asked how he is doing and then listened.

Most of you probably have no idea how important your efforts have been. As of this writing Sean has turned the corner. His body is starting to mend and I am so grateful to each of you who have contributed in your own way. We are getting our son back.

Healing comes in many forms, most of them easily overlooked. So often we only recognize acts of an epic nature. No doubt we all would like to be world-class healers able to touch illness, suffering, or deformity and see miraculous results. Our culture seems to be attuned to the grand gesture, the larger-than-life persona.

Yet I am beginning to suspect that the real miracles often go unnoticed. They are the simple things, like one stranger reaching across the counter to another. That is the moment of the opening of the heart. It is in that precious and fleeting encounter that we are invited into the oneness that shamans, mystics, monks, and seers have long described as the foundation for All That Is.

Each of us has that gift to offer the world regardless of our training, experience, or station in life. Every time we intentionally reach out to suffering, we send out ever expanding ripples of healing. Because those ripples inevitably grow beyond our perception, we seldom realize the awe-inspiring implications of the simple gesture—until we are on the receiving end. Then we understand.

Each of us has a potential beyond anything we could imagine. We have all inherited a divine spark. It is the power of unexpected compassion. And in that lies a key for the transformation of human consciousness.

On behalf of my son and our family, I thank you all for the outpouring of love and concern we have felt. I thank you, as well, for inviting us into the mystery of unexpected compassion.

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